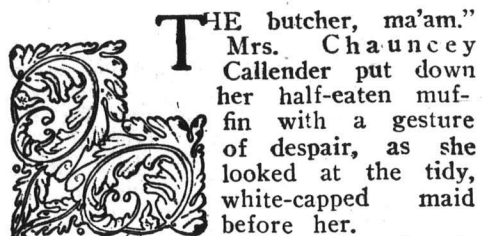


A GOOD DINNER.

By MARY STEWART CUTTING.



THE butcher, ma'am." Mrs. Chauncey Callender put down her half-eaten muffin with a gesture of despair, as she looked at the tidy, white-capped maid before her.

"Why does he always come at breakfast time? As if it is possible to know then what one is going to want for the day! I'm sure I can't think of a thing! Chauncey, you might help me. I get so tired planning the meals, and it's very hard to order for a small family. What would you like for dinner tonight?"

"Roast peacock," said Mr. Callender.

"Would you like a beefsteak?" His wife patiently ignored the last remark, which as a stock answer to a stock question had even ceased to irritate her.

"I shouldn't mind having it."

"Shouldn't mind having it! I'm asking you if you want it."

"I want anything that you do."

"Oh, Chauncey! You'll drive me crazy-mad some day. I wish you'd express a preference; it would be so much easier for me. Would you like chicken? I know that Cadmus has poultry on Wednesday."

Mr. Callender's expression became suddenly tinged with melancholy. Al-

lone in the meals lately. "If I were like some wives—"

"The butcher, ma'am—he's waiting," interposed the maid, apologetically.

"Tell him I'll come down to the village myself and give the order," said Mrs. Callender with dignity. "I'll surprise you with a really good dinner tonight, something out of the ordinary. We'll have a dinner party for ourselves."

"All right," said Mr. Callender with amiable alacrity, feeling relieved of all individual responsibility. "Let's, as the children say, I'll bring out a bottle of wine and some flowers for you to carry out the idea," he added, with a magnificent co-operation in her plans that would have made up for all his previous shortcomings if he had not suddenly remarked as he was going out of the door:

"By the way, we may have company tonight, but I'm not sure. I nearly forgot to mention it."

"Chauncey!"

"A couple of Englishmen, over here to interview the firm; nice fellows. You'd like 'em. They may give us a big order if things are satisfactory, and we treat 'em right."

"Chauncey!"

But he was gone for his train. Mrs. Callender looked horrified, and then laughed. It was a way she had. His unexpectedness was always a secret delight to her, although she outwardly bemoaned it; it gave her a gambler's interest in existence, and also a pleasing sense of masculine masterfulness. She was wont to thank heaven she was married to a man.

At no time would Mrs. Callender have been averse to the society of two nice men for dinner. She decided at once to expect them permanently, and accordingly took her cookery books in for consultation with the kitchen divinity, an elderly competent woman, newly installed, whose look of aggrieved patience had been gained from a peripatetic experience of young and erratic housewives.

This being swooped a pile of dish-towels off in one arm from the back of a chair as Mrs. Callender drew it forward, swooped a cluster of dishes from the table, and with still another swoop wiped the white oil-cloth cover clean enough for the books to be deposited on it. She then stood, her hands in front of her, rigidly attentive to the words of fate.

There was, however, an innate joyousness about young Mrs. Callender which bubbled forth at all times and in all places, carrying preconceived opinions with it. The countenance of the cook instantly relaxed as Mrs. Callender beamingly said:

"I'm going to have a good dinner tonight, Catherine, and I want you to help me."

"Yes, ma'am—for how many?"

"Only four. I've decided on some of the things I want. You know how to make cream of celery soup."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And boiled salmon with white sauce—you made the last very nicely; and cucumbers dressed with oil and vinegar—"

"You'll have to order the oil, ma'am, as we're just out of it."

"Yes, I will; of course, we'll need it for the mayonnaise also. I'll have tomato salad, and I wish you would make some cheese wafers to go with it like those we had when you came last week. They were awfully good. And I want just a few rhubarb tarts and a frozen chocolate pudding for dessert—here's the receipt for that—with whipped cream. And you might make a small cake of any kind that's easy, Catherine."

"What kind of meat is it to be, ma'am?"

"Spring lamb," said Mrs. Callender with all the solemnity which such a resolution demanded. To buy real



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though he was not metropolitan in appearance, manner, and habit, his early existence had been spent upon a farm, where the killing and eating up of chickens at a certain period of the year was an economic process, compulsory upon the household. A momentary sickness and distaste of life seemed evolved from the recollection as he answered:

"I don't seem to care, much for chicken."

"You never do, and I am so fond of it. Well, chops then. Would you like breaded chops?"

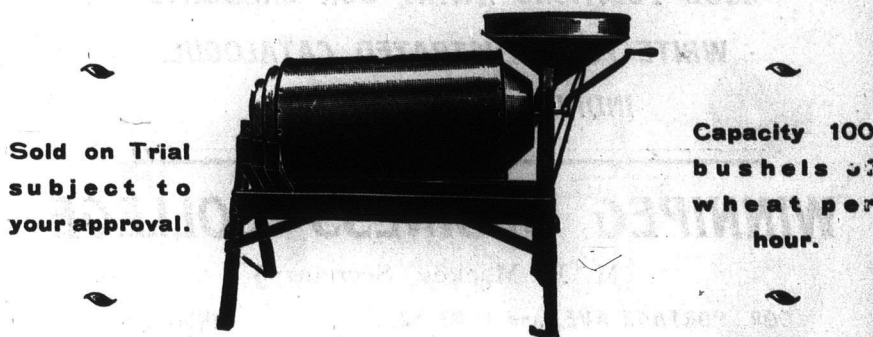
"We have those almost every night, don't we?" returned Mr. Callender briskly, under the impression that he was being agreeable. "When in doubt, have chops. Oh, yes, I like them well enough, when they're not raw in the middle, like the last. But get what you want yourself, Cynthia, it really doesn't make any difference to me."

"That's so like you! Why don't you tell me at the time when things are wrong, instead of coming out with it like this, afterwards? Why didn't you say the chops were raw? Mine were all right." She regarded him with affectionate exasperation, her wrath tempered by a guilty consciousness that there had been undue

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